

**BLACK-FOOTED FERRET**  
**(*Mustela nigripes*)**

**STATUS:** Endangered (32 FR 4001; March 11, 1967) without critical habitat. Experimental nonessential population designated (61 FR 11320, March 20, 1996).

**SPECIES DESCRIPTION:** A weasel-like animal that has a yellow-buff coloration with black feet, tail tip, and eye mask, and a light colored nose. Body length is 38-46 cm (15-18 in) and tail length is 13-15 cm (5-6 in).

**HABITAT:** Grassland plains on mountain basins to 3,150 m (10,500 ft) elevation. Usually found in association with prairie dogs, which serve as their primary food source while also providing the ferrets with abandoned burrows for shelter.

**RANGE: Historic:** All or portions of the States of Colorado, Arizona, Utah, New Mexico, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Texas, Wyoming, North Dakota, and South Dakota, and the Provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan, Canada.

**Current:** Only reintroduced populations are known to exist in the wild in Wyoming, Montana, South Dakota and now Aubrey Valley in Coconino County, Arizona. Undiscovered wild populations may still exist where prairie dogs persist, including in Arizona.

**REASONS FOR DECLINE/VULNERABILITY:** Endangered due to loss of habitat resulting from destruction of original grasslands. They also declined because of prairie dog control programs that eliminated the ferret's sources of food and shelter. Canine distemper or other diseases may also have been a factor in their decline.

**NOTES:** A Recovery Plan was completed in June 1978 and revised in August 1988.

Captive breeding is being conducted at several zoos and other facilities across the country, including the Phoenix Zoo.

Listed as a species of Wildlife of Special Concern by the State of Arizona.